BIRTH

842 847 Except in some of the economically poorest areas any increase of the family was a cause for joy- in the country not just for the immediate family, but for the whole village. However, boys were greatly preferred, especially among the mountaineers, the birth of a girl being something of a disappointment. Among the Kartvelian mountaineers, female infanticide still occurred in the nineteenth century; the Khevsur and Pshav practiced birth control mainly by abortion, no couple being allowed to have their first child until the third year of marriage, the second after seven years, while the third must be the last. During menstruation and childbirth the Khevsur women were considered unclean and were banished to special huts (called samrevlo) outside the village. 841 844

• 551 The names given to children are now mostly those usual in Christian and Islamic countries, though the older custom of giving animal names to boys and terms of affection to girls has not died out, especially among the highlanders.

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3. Naming

Islamism has greatly influenced the custom of naming children, though the ancient names of animals are still given to children. The Ingush boy often receives a name of an animal, for example, Ox, Dog. The girl may be called *Asi-vakhara* ("She who Mounts a Calf"), or *Dzhali-vakhara* ("She Whose Keeper is a Dog").[47] The Kists call their boys by such names as *Ali, Tashtarukva, Gers, Chocb, Elbert, Shoka, Bosh, Ekash, Noga, Mahemet*; the girls, by such names as *Sauvalik, Badigi, Balakai, Tutai, Patuma, Tsabi, Aragus.*[48] Among the Avars every boy and girl receives a name immediately after birth; after the demise of the father, his first name is added to that of his child, for example, Mahamed, the Son of Ali, or "... the Daughter of Ali." The Avars do not have family names, and never is a child named after the mother.[49] The Khevsurs and the Pshavs often name their boys after wild animals, as symbols of the future character of the boy. Girls are often named after words of affection.[50] A boy may receive a name such as *Mgela* ("Wolf"), *Vepkhvia* ("Panther"), *Datvia* ("Bear"),[51] *Zizila* ("Chick"),[52] *Zaglika* ("Dog"),[53] whereas a girl may be called *Mzia* ("Little Sun"), *Tetrua* ("Fair-Complexioned"), *Gulta-mze* ("Sun of the *Heart*"), *Mze-vinari* ("Who is the Sun?"), *Mzekala* ("Miss Sun"), *Deduna* ("Mother Dear"), *Natela* ("Brightness"), *Gandza* ("Treasure"). Of course they have also other names, some being of Christian origin: *Khutara* ("The Witty One"), *Gamikhard* ("Joy Bringer"), *Berdeva* ("The Old Lady"), *Imeda* ("Hope"), *Georgi, Ivane, Mariam, Tamara, Elena.*[54] Some favourite Christian names among the Tushi are: *Georgi, Gabrill, Theodor, David, Tamar, Maria, Anna.*[55] The Pshavs sometimes receive a Christian name from their priest; nevertheless the family insist on calling their children by an ancient Pshav name.[56] The Ossetes are fond of names of animals too. According to Kovalevskij, a child receives two names, an official Christian or Mohammedan name and one of a wild or domestic animal.[57] Pčelina believes that "strange" names like *Khoebys* ("Puppy"), *Saukuydz* ("Black Dog"), *Dombay*

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[47] Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, II, p. 125.

[48] Güldenstädt, *Beschreibung der kaukasischen Länder*, p. 149.

[49] Abercromby, *A Trip through the Eastern Caucasus, etc.*, p. 96. However, there is one exception: when the Akhtinians and Rutulians marry one of their daughter to another sib in order to keep the groom's sib from dieing out. Cf. *supra*, p. 52.

[50] Mourier, *Guide au Caucase*, I, pp. 152 f.

[51] Eristov, *op. cit.*, pp. 114 f.

[52] Hahn, *Bilder aus dem Kaukasus*, p. 65.

[53] Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

[54] Eristov, *l. c.*; Hahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 82; Mourier, *l. c.*

[55] Güldenstädt, *Reisen durch Russland und im kaukasischen Gebirge*, I, p. 378.

[56] Makalatija, "Iz starogo narodnogo byta Pšavov," SE, 1938, No. 1, p. 113. See his large list of Pshav names, *op. cit.*, pp. 113 f.

[57] Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 212. For examples see Erckert, *Der Kaukasus*, p. 117.

("Lion"), *Vari* ("Vulture"), etc. are intended to deceive the evil spirits, who are able to take the life of the child only if they can call it by its true name.[58]

4. Segregation

A Lesghian woman becomes unclean through childbirth, and hence the father may not be present at the birth nor during the entire period of uncleaness, which lasts for several weeks.[59] Child-bearing renders the mother unclean in Ossetia as well. The Mountain Georgians have special birthhouses for expectent mothers. In Svanetia the mother is unclean for 40 days,[60] in Khevsuria and Pshavia, a few days longer.[61] A woman can be cleansed (in Khevsuria and Pshavia) by washing her hair in cow's urine.[62] In Ossetia a woman is considered unclean for six weeks after childbirth. During this period she is not allowed to work, except to sweep the floor and look after the children. The marital act is likewise forbidden.[63]

5. Weaning

Very little data is available regarding weaning of children and taboos during the period of lactation. As a general rule, the Lesghians wean their children at the age of five or six.[64] The Avars usually do not wean them before they have reached the use of reason.[65] Pshav children are weaned at the age of four.

6. Fire-place Ceremony

We have seen what an important part the hearth played in the marriage ceremonies of the Northwestern Caucasians, the Ingushi and Ossetes. By circling round the hearth the bride officially became a member of the family. We should also expect a birth ceremony of some sort or other at the fire-place, by which the infant would likewise be officially recognized as a fully fledged member of the family and by which the newborn would come in contact with the ancestors and receive their protection. We find such a ceremony among the neighbouring peoples of Iranian stock, the Ossetes[66] and the Kurds.[67] Though the hearth

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[58] Pčelina, "Rodil'nye obyčai u Osetin," SE, 1937, No. 4, p. 98.
For Ossetine naming ceremony, see *op. cit.*, pp. 96 ff.
Could not this fondness for animal names be a vestige of individual totemism?

[59] Kovalevskij, "Iranian Culture in the Caucasus," *The Archaeological Review*, June, 1888, cited by Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 202. See also *op. cit.*, I, pp. 97 f, 139 f.

[60] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, ii, p. 110.

[61] G. Demidov, *V uščelijach pervobytnoj gruzii (Chevsuretija)*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, p. 16. Požidaev (*Gorcy severnago kavkaza*, p. 107) says that the Khevsur mother is "unclean" for 30 days.

[62] Demidov, *l. c.* After delivery, the mother must remain in the birth-hut for two weeks; after that she must live in the stable for about five weeks. S. I. Makalatija, *op. cit.*, p. 112. Today the Pshavs use holy water instead of urine (*ibid.*).

[63] Pčelina, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

[64] Nansen, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

[65] Erckert, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

[66] Pčelina, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

[67] Jankó, *Néprajzi, etc.* Zichy's *Kaukázusi és középázsiai utazásai*, p. 63.

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among the Ingiloi (Islamized Georgians). It has effected the greatest changes in Daghestan, where it has existed the longest. It assumes a middle position in Circassia and Chechnia, where, however, there are important tribal differences that must be taken into account. The Abadzekhs, Shapsugs, Natukhazh, Beshilbey, and Barakey follow their own customary laws rather than the *šarî'a* much more so than do the Bzhedukh, Beslenians, and Kabardians who place both customary and Islamic law on the same level. In regard to the Chechen tribes, we must remember, the *šarî'a* was not accepted by the Ichkerians and Chechens properly so-called till Shamyl's time, while the Karabulaks, Kists, Galgai and Galashi have never expressly aknowledged it.[2]

Of the non-Caucasians, the Kumyks and the Nogai have been the most thoroughly Islamized,[3] being among the first to accept the Koran. The Ossetes and the Karachai disregard the *šarî'a* almost completely, following their own *adats* instead.[4]

3. Lesser Historical Influences

(1) **Christianity.** Christianity, too, has left its marks on the customary marriage and family law of the Caucasians. For example, one of the strongest counteractions against Avestic *endogamy* in Northwest and South Caucasus was Christianity (*supra*, pp. 53 f). Official *naming* of children (*supra*, p. 143), official *marriage contracts*, some *penal laws* (e. g., *supra*, p. 178), and, in some cases, changes in *divorce laws* and in the practice of *polygyny* (*supra*, p. 42) are certainly of Christian origin.

Christianity, of course, has had the greatest influence among the Georgians of the lowlands, and considerably less among the mountain tribes of Georgia, and still less among the Northwestern Caucasians and Chechens, and least of all among the Lesghians.

(2) **Avesta.** We have found a few traces of Avestic teaching in the marriage and family observances of the Caucasians, such as the rule of *endogamy* among all the Lesghians (and in pre-Christian Georgia). Zoroastrianism is also a possible explanation for the *local endogamy* of the Svans (*supra*, p. 53) and perhaps also for the obligation of purification after childbirth by washing in cow's urine.[5] The sphere of Iranian influence stretched far beyond Georgia and Daghestan. There is no longer any doubt, for example, that the laws of the Vendidafs were known also to the Ossetes.[6] Nevertheless, the influence on North Caucasian marriage and family law has been only slight.

(3) **Armenian, Byzantine, and Roman Influences.** There have been other historical causes for the change and unification of the marriage and family *adats* of the Caucasians, such as Armenian, Byzantine, Roman influence etc., but

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[2] Leontovič, II, p. 233, § 8.

[3] Leontovič, II, p. 233, § 4.

[4] Leontovič, II, p. 232, § 7.

[5] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, I, pp. 97 f. Cf. also Zacharias, *Protohistory*, p. 351.

[6] Ladyženskij, *op. cit.*, p. 243.